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A Weekly Newspaper Devoted to
All the
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of
Southern Arizona
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YAQUI RIVER VALLEY

A Synopsis of the Garden Spot of the Republic of Mexico by P. B. Chisum of Guaymas

The advantages of the Sonora & Sinaloa Irrigation Co.'s canal, in the Yaqui River valley, in the State of Sonora, Mexico, over all other canals of the world, are:

- 1st. Its abundance of water the year round.
- 2nd. There are no frosts to bite the young and tender plants.
- 3rd. The convenience of the location for distribution of the products to all parts of the world by railroad or steamship and sailing vessels.

Perhaps no country on earth offers the farmer inducements so great as does the state of Sonora. The great volume of water drained from the Sierra Madre mountains and the mesa lands, comprising an area of sixteen thousand square miles, the water from which all concentrates in the Yaqui river, is sufficient guarantee to recommend it to the world as a point to be preferred for operation by both capital and labor. With an abundance of water and the finest soil in the world, a mild and healthful climate, the like of which no other country can boast, everything that can be grown in other countries can there be produced, as can also a dozen or more articles which cannot be raised in other countries.

On the Yaqui lands the system of planting corn has been the same for centuries. When he has no master the Indian is lazy and works as he likes. As an implement for planting corn he cuts a stick with a length sufficient to permit his making a hole in the soil without stooping. This stick he points at one end, which he drives into the ground a few inches, dropping a grain of corn into the hole thus made, and covering it by shoving over a little earth with his foot. After a rain, when the soil is soft, he takes his pointed stick and about two quarts of corn, which are amply sufficient for his needs, and proceeds to plant his crop. That task completed he retires to his jacal and enjoys in ease and idleness the time intervening between this short seed time and a bountiful harvest. From each hole made by the pointed stick stalks shoot forth until six or eight are growing from each grain of corn that was planted. Each stalk bears from two to six ears of corn, and the crop they make supplies the Indian's family with bread the entire year. With no more effort he has, also, an abundance of watermelons, cantaloupes, squashes and garbanzos (dried peas). When he feels like enjoying a meat or fish diet, he goes to the shore of the gulf, kills great green turtles and gathers delicious clams and oysters, and upon those toothsome dainties lives like a prince. If he is industrious he will remain at the seaside and kill sharks for their oil, which is a merchantable commodity of which he can gather several hundred gallons with very little labor. If he is not disposed to gather shark oil he returns home with a large supply of dried turtle meat, and, perhaps, a store of dried shrimps, upon which he will revel for several months.

The Yaqui Indians are as strong and healthy as oxen and know no sickness. They will outtravel any horse. The women are the same. Any day the traveler will see them by the banks of the river, busying themselves with their washing, meanwhile their children playing in water, their little bronze bodies shining like velvet. Most of them make a tree their sole and only habitation the entire year, the climate being so mild and equable that they never require other shelter, and so healthy that medicines are never needed. The river is full of fish, the woods teeming with deer and antelope, and the meadows are alive with wild geese, ducks and sand hill cranes. So, with their cows and goats supplying them milk and cheese, their herds are unexcelled in both abundance and variety. With the wool from their sheep they make their sarapes and woolen shirts. With plenty to eat and wear the Indian is fixed. The Yaqui Indians supply a great deal of the labor in all parts of Sonora, and they are

faithful, intelligent servants and workmen. Among them are carpenters, masons, blacksmiths and musicians, who have been employed outside and learned from the white man some of the handicrafts of civilization.

In the Yaqui Valley are more than a million acres of the finest land the sun ever shone upon, waiting only for the white man to convert it into a paradise and make happy hundreds of thousands of people with a future before them. I recommend the Yaqui lands to every man in Europe who can come to Sonora as a farmer or land owner, and advise him to come at once and build a happy home for himself and those he prizes.

It would require many pages to describe the great range and variety of production of this favored region. In the list may be mentioned

COTTON.

Which can be planted the first of March, one month earlier than it can be planted in the interior, owing to their lack of water. Picking can be commenced in June, and the Yaqui river planter can pick cotton steadily for four months before planters elsewhere have any ready to pick, and it can be picked steadily six months, consecutively, giving the advantage of a picking season two months longer and four months earlier than that of the interior. Again, owing to its being further south, if the months of January and February consist of mild weather, the Yaqui river planter will continue picking without replanting for two or three years. No other country has the same advantages. The yield of cotton per acre is from one thousand and four hundred (1400) to two thousand and six hundred (2,600) pounds. The lands near the sea coast produce a long fibre cotton which equals the best Sea Island cotton.

SUGAR CANE.

Grows to enormous size. I have seen the white cane from ten to twelve feet high and two inches in diameter, and the red cane from ten to eighteen feet high and three or more inches in diameter and very rich in sugar.

WHEAT.

Grows higher, stronger and produces more to the acre than any place in the world. The Indians formerly planted the wheat one step or a yard apart, a single grain at each distance, and the result was always from 100 to 150 stems to each seed. This may seem an exaggeration, but I can prove the assertion by sending the stems, which I will be pleased to do, if requested. The soil is an alluvial deposit fifty to sixty feet in depth. This will give the reader an idea of the fertility and great value of land in the Yaqui Valley.

POTATOES.

Of a superior quality grow abundantly and can be planted and harvested twice a year. The sweet potato grows very large and yields a profitable crop. The Irish potato can be harvested and shipped to Chicago, New York, and all the other large cities of the United States about the middle of April, while they can be laid down in London so the dwellers in that metropolis can enjoy Mexican new potatoes the first days in May.

TOMATOES.

Commence bearing in February and continue bearing. Green peas, green beans, beets, radishes, onions and a multitude of other things, too numerous to mention, are also ready for market in February.

ORANGES.

It is unnecessary for me to write of the Sonora orange. Its reputation is established and world wide. It equals any orange raised, and everywhere in the United States it is preferred over all others for its size and fine flavor. It reaches the consumer at a time when the market is bare of other oranges, needs no competition and commands fancy prices.

LIRES.

Lemons, olives, grapes, pine apples, bananas, plantains, aguacates, mangoes and zapotes all grow there and produce large crops. Tobacco grows as freely and is of superior quality. The

AFRICAN DATE.

Grows vigorously and in the third year produces from ten to twenty-five y. No landscape is so pleasing to the

eye as one which includes a grove of date palm and cocoa trees, and no driveway so delightful as one beneath their umbrageous protection. By simply dropping the seeds of the trees in two parallel lines and letting them grow such driveways are made without expense or care to the land owner. To pick the fruit is the only attention ever given the tree.

In enumerating the products of the Yaqui lands I have not included coffee because its cultivation has never been there attempted. I am of the opinion that the coffee berry can be successfully and profitably produced. It is successfully grown at a place called Higuera de Zaragoza, which is about 100 miles south of the Yaqui lands. The crop is good and sold in the immediate vicinity at fifty cents per pound. Why not try its cultivation in the Yaqui Valley?

Tobacco of a good quality has been brought to this port, from the Yaqui lands in large quantities, and it was all grown and cured by the Indians. By planting fine seed, with careful cultivation and proper handling of the crop, I am confident that wonders can be done with tobacco. The soil and climate unite in creating conditions which should produce tobacco equal to the best from the State of Vera Cruz, Mexico, or the Island of Cuba.

I would like to impress upon the mind of the reader the prices paid in this region for articles which could be easily and readily produced in the Yaqui Valley, viz.: potatoes five and six cents a pound, onions six and eight cents, ham and bacon forty-five cents, eggs sixty cents a dozen and butter seventy-five cents per pound. These are regular prices, caused by scarcity, as the people here do not care to devote time and attention to anything but mining, and as a consequence there is a scarcity of farm products and high prices prevail. To meet the demand the articles just enumerated are imported from California by shiploads.

LOCATION.

The Yaqui river empties into the gulf about thirty miles down the coast from Guaymas, and can be reached by sail or steamer in a very few hours. Stages from Batamotal, a station on the Sonora railway about eight miles from Guaymas, reach the Valley at Cocorit, which is near the head of the canal. Recently I met Colonel Peña, who is chief engineer for the Mexican government, in charge of work on the Yaqui. He was on his way to the City of Mexico, and he assured me that he was about to make an effort with President Diaz to secure construction of a railway from Guaymas to Cocorit, a distance of eighty-five miles. Such a road would enable a visitor to leave Guaymas in the morning, reach Cocorit for dinner and give him considerable time for looking over the Valley before returning the following day.

THE STATE OF SONORA.

Is now attracting the attention of all the world, by the recent discovery of many rich deposits of gold and silver. The result is the springing up of many new camps, every one of which creates an increased demand for commodities which must be supplied regardless of cost. Somebody must farm; all cannot be miners unless they can live without eating. No region in the entire world offers to the agriculturist inducements so great as those offered by Sonora.

Last year the Spanish government

the capital of the State of Sonora, an order for two hundred thousand fanegas of garbanzos (dried peas). (A fanega is 220 pounds and garbanzos are worth \$6.60). To have paid for this order would have required one million two hundred thousand dollars. It could not be filled. Were there good farmers on the Yaqui lands it could have been filled easily, and to the satisfaction of the Spanish government, which annually consumes great quantities of garbanzos in the rations for its army and navy, and will be one of the best customers of the Yaqui Valley when it raises that product for export. The Garbanzo is a Spanish pea, and is consumed extensively in Spain, Cuba and all South America, where the demand is so great that the home supply has to be supplemented by importation. In no region in the world can it be grown better or more profitably than in the Yaqui Valley.

This state supplies the lower southwestern coast states with cotton, flour, garbanzos and beans, while the gulf supplies the mining camps with oil, and Europe with pearls and pearl shells for fine buttons and fancy pearl articles. The turtle of this gulf furnishes the "carapaz" for beautiful combs.

The tortoise shell comb is greatly esteemed all the world over. All these articles come from the Gulf of California.

The great oyster beds of this gulf are near Medano, at the mouth of the Yaqui river. By shoveling them from the sand beds clams can be gathered by the ton. The green turtle can be taken at any point on the gulf coast between the mouth of the Colorado river and Mazatlan. Large quantities of rock cod and great schools of mackerel are near the coast. The breeding grounds for mackerel are at Carmen Island and in the bay of Muleja, on the Lower California coast. During October and November the mackerel come to the Sonora side of the gulf, and are caught in great quantities. (Sonora is the mainland on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Cortez, or, as it is generally called, the Gulf of California). Fish are cheap and plentiful here the year round. In the port of Guaymas, during November and December, mackerel are sold at eight fish for ten cents. During the entire year rock cod weighing from twenty to thirty pounds can be bought at twenty-five cents each, oysters at twenty-five cents a hundred, and fifty cents will buy a large green turtle amply sufficient for a choice dinner for one hundred persons.

I will stop here, as I believe I have shown enough to convince any reasonable person of the merits of this country unequalled for man to live in and pounds of fruit, with an annually increasing yield thereafter. The coconut, one of the most beautiful trees of the tropics, thrives there and attains a remarkably vigorous growth. As it spreads a great area of shade, that boon to man in hot climates, the drives are usually lined with the cocoa palm. It is also a good producer, but even if it produced nothing it would be planted for the sake of its ornamental beauty, enjoy the good things nature has provided him. With a substantial government, such as we enjoy under the administration of President Diaz, there is nothing to be desired but men to cultivate the soil, clear away the trees and underbrush, and replace them with wheat, corn, cotton, sugar, tobacco, etc., and in return fill their strong boxes with gold and silver, and supply all their wants.

MISCELLANEOUS.

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